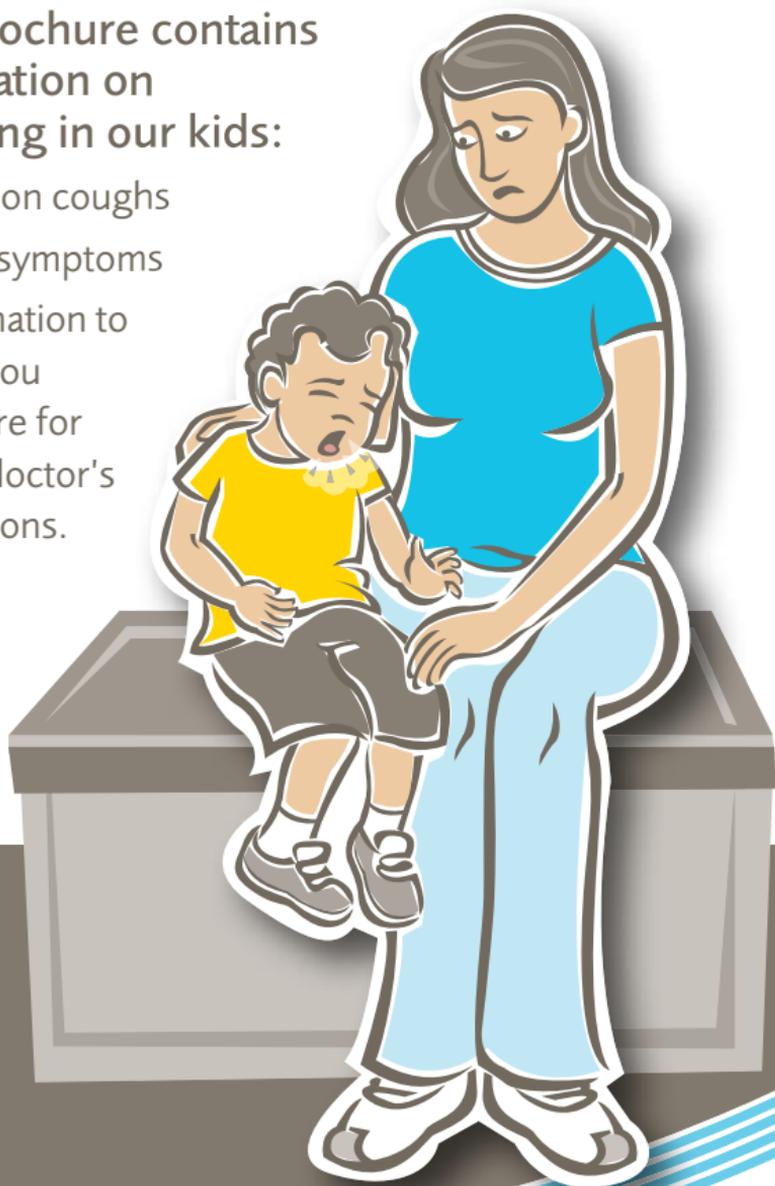


# Does your child Cough?

This brochure contains information on coughing in our kids:

- common coughs
- other symptoms
- information to help you prepare for your doctor's questions.





## DOES YOUR CHILD COUGH?

Coughing is common in children, especially when they are pre-school age, and is usually short-lived.

Ten to twenty percent of preschoolers will cough for three weeks or more following a cold. Even

children without a cold may cough on average ten times a day but not consistently every day, and usually not at night.

A daily cough for greater than four weeks is NOT normal and may be a sign of chest disease.



It is important to take your child to the doctor if they have:

- a persistent daily cough for longer than four weeks; or
- a cough and other problems, including:
  - working hard with their breathing; or
  - breathing fast; or
  - having a temperature higher than 38.5°C; or
  - not speaking normally or being unable to finish a whole sentence because of their coughing or breathing; or
  - wheezing or whistling in their chest; or
- a cough and you are worried that something is wrong.

**If in doubt, always see your doctor.**

### **Note**

*Don't just assume that a wet cough is a "post-nasal drip" or mucus running down the back of the throat from a sinus infection.*

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF COUGH

A cough is usually wet or dry. A wet cough sounds 'chesty' and phlegmy. A dry cough is less likely to produce phlegm (mucus) and can sound irritated, harsh, barking or whooping.

Usually a cough does not require treatment and gets better by itself within 3-4 weeks.

### **Common causes of different types of cough:**

- 1** Colds or upper respiratory tract infections. Young children usually have between 6 to 12 of these a year.
- 2** Asthma – an asthma related cough is usually dry and occurs at night, with sport or in the early morning. An asthma cough is usually associated with other symptoms such as wheeze, allergy (eczema or hayfever), or a history of asthma and allergy in the family. If coughing is the ONLY problem the child has it is very unlikely to be due to asthma.
- 3** Smoke exposure – second hand cigarette smoke commonly causes children to cough even when they are well. Make sure your child's environment is smoke-free. Put smoke-free stickers up to let everyone know your home and car are smoke-free. If you want to give up smoking try calling the free Quitline on 0800 778 778.
- 4** Chest infections – a wet, chesty cough is likely to be an infection. If it lasts more than four weeks there may be underlying chest problems and your child should see a doctor.
- 5** Whooping cough.
- 6** Croup.

## SOME QUESTIONS YOUR DOCTOR MAY ASK YOU

It is important to prepare information on your child's cough for your doctor. Here are some questions that your doctor may ask you.

- **What is the cough like?**
  - Is it a dry cough?      – Is it a barking cough?
  - Is it a wet cough?
- **Does the child produce spit or phlegm?**  
(Children under five years do not spit up phlegm and may swallow it. Small children and babies sometimes vomit it up.)
- **When does the child cough?**
  - At night?                      – Early in the morning?
  - With feeding?
- **Does the child cough with exercise or sport?**
- **Are there any other breathing symptoms?**
  - Wheeze?                      – Whistling in the chest?
  - Fast breathing?              – Sucking in of the chest?
  - Shortness of breath?

**If in doubt, always see your doctor.**

### **Note**

*Cough medicines are not useful for treating cough. However honey (unless there is a reason your child shouldn't have it) may be helpful for a cough due to a viral upper respiratory tract infection.*

This brochure has been produced after consultation with the Starship Respiratory Service by The Asthma Foundation Phone 04-499-4592

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